

Sports psychology applied to new opera studio

Mascarade Opera Studio puts sports psychology at the heart of its young singers' programme



**Applications & auditions for Mascarade Opera Studio
Autumn - Winter 2019**

Inaugural Mascarade Opera Studio

September 2020 - May 2021

Palazzo Corsini al Prato, Florence

Held in conjunction with the New Generation Festival

"a galaxy of rising stars"

The Independent

A new opera studio, **Mascarade Opera Studio**, launching in Florence in September 2020, will put sports psychology at the heart of its nine-month programme for emerging professional opera singers. **Studio Director Dr Ralph Strehle**, a performance coach at the National Opera Studio and Associate Head of Vocal Performance at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, will apply Premier League sports training techniques – motivation, concentration and pre-and post-performance routines – to its ground-breaking opera programme.

The **New Generation Festival**, co-founded by **Maximilian Fane**, **Roger Granville** and **Frankie Parham**, has developed Mascarade Opera Studio to be held in the historic Palazzo Corsini al Prato in Florence starting in September 2020. Calling for applications from ambitious opera talent from all over the world, Mascarade Opera Studio will offer a carefully designed high-ability, nine-month training programme for eight singers and two répétiteurs.



Beyond the nine-month training programme, **Studio Artists** will become part of the international New Generation Festival network with all its connections and career opportunities. Places on the programme for singers and répétiteurs will be fully funded.



The Studio will benefit from the support and expertise of two major operatic leaders: legendary Italian soprano **Mariella Devia** as Honorary President and world-renowned English baritone **Sir Thomas Allen** as Honorary Patron. Mascarade Opera Studio has appointed a full Artistic Advisory Board and already secured visiting staff for the first year of the programme.

Sports psychology training

Psychological performance skills training constitutes a core pillar of MOS' training provision, particularly performance tracking and evaluation, as well as resilience and assertiveness training. Fostering resilience, often misunderstood as 'bouncing back', is to enable psychological flexibility - to take risks, to be adventurous and to have an open mind.

As **Dr Ralph Strehle** explains:

"Joining MOS means you are joining an elite team. Think Scuderia Ferrari. Team cohesion is as important in a music ensemble, as it is in a football team. Whilst we respect knowledge and expertise, we reject the classic 1:1 master-apprentice model at this level. We are interested in information flow, in a model of communication where artistic ideas can be exchanged and discussed freely between staff and studio artists. It is about creating good habits."



The psychological skills training programme has been borrowed and adapted from sports psychology. Designed to the individual Studio Artist's needs, these may include anxiety control, self-confidence, mental toughness, emotional control, attention control, work ethic, optimism, competitiveness, etc.

The psychological methods used to strengthen these skills are goal setting, imagery training, attention control training, stress inoculation and relaxation training. Particular attention will be given to the audition process: pre-performance, performance and post-performance routines. Feedback will be sought, for example, in the form of self-assessments, self-reports and video analysis.

Team cohesion will be fundamental for achieving these goals. MOS aims for the Studio Artists to see themselves as part of a team rather than as a disorganised collection of individuals. In order to achieve task cohesion and social cohesion, they will aim to reconcile group outcomes with individual outcomes.

MOS will offer extensive career management training covering areas such as presentation skill, communication skills, non-verbal communication, virtual communication, networking, time management, influencing skills, conflict resolution, networking, social media.

Artistic advisory board

The artistic advisory board includes BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Finalist **Anush Hovhannisyan**, leading Wagnerian soprano **Susan Bullock**, conductors **Jessica Cottis** and **Jonathon Santagada**, vocal coaches **Jonathan Papp** and **Carmen Santoro**. Further direction comes from **Christophe Boehmke** (International Opera Studio at Hamburg State Opera) alongside **Samantha McShane**, Head of Artistic Planning at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and **Claudia Assmann**, press and media expert.



The artistic advisory board will take an active role in curating the programme and promoting the studio's international interests. MOS feels strongly that women are under-represented in key roles in the opera and music industry. Over half of the members of the artistic advisory board are women.

Maximilian Fane, Mascarade Opera Studio Chief Executive, commented: *"Florence - the birth place of opera - is the ideal place for an opera training Renaissance. Training at MOS will culminate in performance showcases staged with orchestra and a variety of other selected performance opportunities. The aim of our programme is not just to prepare young and exceptionally talented opera singers and répétiteurs for major careers in opera. We want to re- evaluate opera training and the function of opera in society."*

Funding

The total 6-year investment is €2,500,000, with €25,735 per year to be invested into each participant directly. With plans to increase the number of studio places to 16 by 2024, this is a total of €1,750,000 invested directly into Studio Artists, a total efficiency rate of 70%.

mascaradeoperastudio.it/

New Generation Festival

Wednesday 28 August – Saturday 31 August 2019

Palazzo Corsini al Prato, Florence



The **New Generation Festival** returns from **28 to 31 August 2019** with performances of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* held in the ravishing ornamental gardens of Florence's Palazzo Corsini al Prato with a budding young cast of tomorrow's stars. The festival was established to create an international platform for the finest young operatic talents, and now announces long-term initiatives including a cross-border **New Generation Concert Series** with the newly-opened **Andermatt Concert Hall** in Switzerland.

Setting Mozart's comedic tale against the scenic backdrop of the Palazzo Corsini al Prato gardens, the opera's line-up includes **Daniel Mirośław** as Figaro, **Anna El-Khashem** as Susanna, **Faik Mansuroğlu** as the Count and **Nela Šarić** as the Countess. The international cast is drawn from nine countries, and is formed of young singers at the outset of their careers.

Many are recent participants in opera studios and academies, including the Royal Opera House's Jette Parker Young Artists Programme (Chuma Sijeqa, appearing as Bartolo), Bayerische Staatsoper Opera Studio (Anna El-Khashem), the Fabbrica Young Artist Programme (Domenico Pellicola, appearing as Basilio, and Sara Rocchi, appearing as Cherubino) the Georg Solti Accademia (Faik Mansuroğlu), and Garsington's Alvarez Young Artists' Programme (James Corrigan, appearing as Antonio) or are making house debuts around the world.

Jonathan Santagada returns to conduct the Bologna-based **Orchestra Senzaspine**, whose members are all under 35 years old, while director **Victoria Stevens** will span centuries in a production that uses 21st-century technological surprises with costumes designed by the legendary **Sartoria Tirelli**. **Ralph Strehle** will provide further training and support of the cast.

The New Generation Festival provides an international platform for young musical talent, with the aim of breaking down barriers between generations: the age of the festival's 2018 audience ranged from 8 to 91 and over 50% of the opera audience was under 35.

newgenerationfestival.org

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